

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
COUNCIL 2017-18

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Exhibit 5

Subject: Chief's Letter of Intent for Wildland Fire - 2018

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs and WO
Directors

As I consider the upcoming fire year, employee safety and security are foremost on my mind. We are all responsible to *Stand Up For Each Other* and ensure we are fostering a work environment characterized by mutual trust, valuing differences, listening to understand, and learning from each other. Employees must work in a safe, healthy, harassment-free, productive and resilient environment, where all are recognized and valued for their contributions.

I also want to be clear that we will continue to implement strategies and tactics that commit responders only to operations where and when they can be successful. We will deploy our people under conditions where important values actually at risk are protected with the least exposure necessary, while maintaining relationships with the communities we serve. Each of us must remain committed to "stop, think and talk" before "acting" in any circumstance that may represent unnecessary exposure.

Wildland fire management is vitally important to the land management mission of our agency, to our partners' missions, and to the American people. We must take the necessary steps to ensure we deliver our mission, including those key land management activities that help reduce fire risk, across all land ownerships. We manage many landscapes that have evolved to depend on fire. We should use wildland fire to achieve desired ecological conditions where possible and where it makes sense.

With this in mind, I provide this direction to ALL employees, as each of you use or engage with fire. Whether from the perspective of employee and public safety, an ecological benefit, the need to protect values at risk, or the strain it can cause on agency budgets, these principals apply:

- We will continue to improve the wildland fire system to one that more reliably protects responders and the public, sustains communities and conserves the land.
- We will continue to engage our partners and our communities early and often to ensure we are sharing risk upstream, to work towards achieving our shared goals and missions.
- As a part of Improving Forest and Rangeland conditions, we will bring urgency and focus to working at larger scales and increasing active management, using all tools we have available, including those Congress just provided to us in the 2018 Omnibus bill.



- We will set expectations to increase and diversify partnerships that deliver outcomes through shared stewardship. We will foster innovation and capacity to streamline processes.

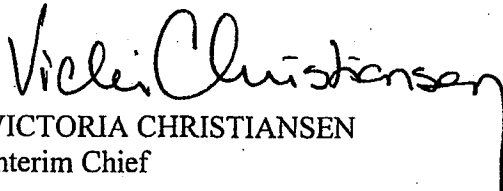
We remain committed to the goals of the *National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy*, which seeks to create resilient landscapes, fire adapted communities and safe and effective wildfire response that bases decisions on risk analysis for all ownerships. The strategy's vision is to safely and effectively extinguish fire when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources; and as a nation, live with wildland fire.

I am very heartened by the recent passage of the Omnibus bill and the fire funding fix that begins in Fiscal Year 2020. When the fire funding fix does take effect, the Forest Service—and the American people—will benefit in two key ways. First, it will end the disruptive practice of transfers from other mission programs to cover firefighting costs. Second, it will stop the erosion of our non-fire programs and help us finally restore balance to our program delivery on behalf of the people we serve. This significant change is a measure of the trust that Congress and the administration place in every one of us. Through your hard work, you have earned the confidence of our elected officials that we will continue to meet the needs of the people we serve. It is our time to step up to the challenge- to achieve even more on the ground – and we can succeed by continuing to look for more efficient and effective ways to get our work done.

I am proud of Forest Service employees and the work we do in meeting the wildland fire challenges we face. For 2018, my expectation is twofold:

1. For all of us to sharply focus our efforts on the risk informed decisions we make as agency administrators, fire leaders, fire responders and land managers.
2. To work together to foster the work environment that all employees and partners want and deserve.

The strong, courageous and forward-thinking people in this agency, along with our partners, can come together to make a difference in our culture. I want every employee to be empowered to continuously improve our work. My sincere thanks to each of you for the great work you do.


VICTORIA CHRISTIANSEN
Interim Chief